



Outreach

National Newsletter

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National Black Farmers Conference Great Success

Black farmers organize for a greater cause.

By LuNisha Vann

There was an elevated spirit in the midst of hundreds of African-American farmers who attended the first National Black Farmers Association (NBFA) Conference 2000 in Richmond, VA on August 24-25, 2000.

This conference provided a

forum for minority farmers to assemble, plan and implement strategies that would retard the plight of African-American farmers in the nation.

The NBFA is a non-profit organization that strives to eliminate and reverse the causes of land loss by small-scale limited resource farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners.

The two-day conference was focused around the theme, "Exploring the Future of the Farmer: What Works!" It was organized as a means to provide small and underserved farmers

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Rep. Eva Clayton, North Carolina, explains the legislative aspects involved in the lawsuit to small farmers during the panel discussion on the Class Action lawsuit.



Undersecretary of Agriculture Mike Dunn shares his views on the fate of African-American farmers in America with LuNisha Vann, editor of the Outreach National Newsletter.



Earl Davis (left), small farmer from Oklahoma, and others wait patiently to pose questions to panel members on the black farmers Class Action Suit panel discussion.



**Sherie Henry, Acting Director,
National Office of Outreach.**
*Read more on Sherie Henry
on page 3*

Director's Notes:

There was a warm spirit that embodied the Richmond Marriott Hotel in Richmond, VA, on August 24-25, 2000, as hundreds of small black farmers assembled to address complex issues and discuss broad-based solutions. "Exploring the Future of the Farmer: What Works!" could not have been a better theme for a conference of the National Black Farmers Association's (NBFA) Integrated Farmers Outreach Program (IFOP) working in partnership with the USDA.

The combined efforts of

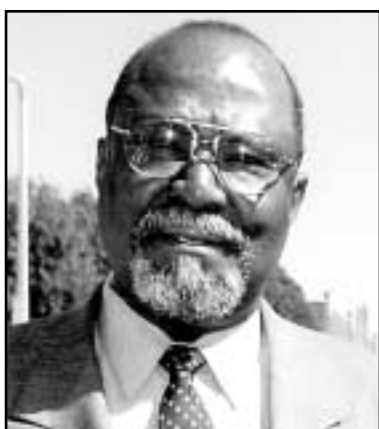
the USDA Civil Rights Implementation Team, the Small Farm Commission, the proclivity of rural constituents, Congress, community-based organizations, and many special interest groups have publicized the lack of equal access – bringing these issues to center stage. The Office of Outreach (OR) will coordinate and facilitate the effort in removing some of the barriers to implement fair, equitable, culturally sensitive outreach efforts. USDA is committed to making all its programs and ser-

vices accessible to all its customers, including the underserved in all demographic areas, and to ensure that each and every customer receives the same level of high quality service.

Let us be mindful to become more involved in this effort by attending conferences, supporting local agriculture organizations and attending seminars. OR is working collaboratively with our internal and external partners to produce positive change; helping to make rural communities better

places for living and raising a family; keeping small and limited resource farmers on their farms; and reaching those who earlier left their farms.

I would like to thank all of those who participated and supported the first National Association of Black Farmers Association Conference. This conference is the beginning of the end. Abraham Lincoln said that USDA was "The People's Department." Extending services to address the country's most potent rural needs will occur one person at a time.



Ralph L. Conley, Project Coordinator, Grasslands Center of Excellence.

Many African-Americans today still hold a simple and limited view of agriculture. When they think of agriculture, they think of milking cows, planting and harvesting corn, driving a tractor, feeding pigs or otherwise living a simple agrarian pastoral life. They think that agriculture is hard, dirty, smelly, undignified, and low paid work. They don't know the full story. The food and agricultural industry is all of what they think and more.

There is agribusiness where millions of people process, deliver, and sell agricultural products. There are government employees, who make and execute agricultural policy, institutions and people that provide credit, machinery, and information, scientists contributing to greater productivity, people who teach agriculture and people who study agriculture. International trade in agricultural products is a multi-billion dollar industry.

Agriculture is a strategic

Editorial

Are African-Americans Apprehensive about Agriculture?

industry, on par with the defense industry, the energy sector, and transportation, in terms of national interest.

Aside from agriculture's contribution to the economy, its role in food security is of national importance. Therefore, it should be carefully regulated and monitored. Agricultural policy should merit the attention and scrutiny that other issues of national security normally do and should support the welfare of first the rural communities and farms, then, the general welfare.

While there may be special niches that could be filled in processing, distribution, and the sale of agricultural products, agribusiness firms have all but taken over these functions. Research is highly specialized and requires high levels of academic achievement. The sub sector of the food and agriculture industry that is the most vulnerable is production. Production agriculture is the backbone of the system. There would be no prosperous processing and distribution systems without production. And there would be limited production without the marketing and distribution systems.

African-Americans have played a major role in the development of the agricultural sector in this country. They

built the wealth of the Old South with their labor and the wealth of the agrarian economy right through the 1960s as either owner/operators of farm enterprises or as farm labor. Agriculture sustained Black Americans until the middle of the 20th century, even though the trend toward urbanization among Blacks had started as early as the turn of the century.

Many African-Americans left the farm because of the lack of capital. In 1987, the U.S. had 23,000 Black farm operators, down from 900,000 in 1923 and approximately 2 million in 1900. Today, there are about 18,000. Half of the farms operated by Blacks have fewer than 50 acres. If the trend continues, African-American farm operators will disappear completely. Land is the basis for wealth because as Will Rogers is quoted as saying, "They ain't making no more". As African-Americans lose land they lose access to capital. Someone compelled to work for wages is infinitely more vulnerable than one who works for oneself and owns the land.

Today African-Americans have little to do with and know even less about food production. They have gone from being self-sufficient to being totally dependent on others where food production and dis-

tribution are concerned. The majority of the rest of the Americans are equally as vulnerable. Herein lies a great danger. The danger is that food can be and has been used as a weapon in political crises. It can be altered so as to stretch shelf life or genetically modified with unknown consequences with the masses being blissfully ignorant of what is happening to the food supply. Highly centralized control of the production and distribution of food raises issues of national importance that all Americans should be aware of and engaged in resolving. It is as important that African-Americans be adequately represented in this sector as it is in engineering, medicine, science, education, art, and entertainment. It is time that African-Americans recognize that we are a product of the earth and that the earth nourishes us. To work to manage and conserve the natural resource base and participate directly in the greatest and most important endeavor of our species is to commune with the basic elements of life and connect with Creation.

The survival and well being as a people demand that they not treat agriculture and natural resources management as something dirty and undignified, but as the noble calling that it is, without which, there is nothing.



Editor's Note

The guest commentary in this section was provided by Ralph Conley, Project Coordinator, Grasslands Center of Excellence, at Langston University, OK. Any opinions contained within are solely the responsibility of the author and not necessarily held by the National 2501 Outreach Programs Newsletter or staff. Letters to the Editor are welcomed, if you are interested in submitting an editorial to the National 2501 Outreach Programs Newsletter, please write to:

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Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP): Needed Changes

*By Dr. Chongo Mundende



Dr. Chongo Mundende, Project Manager, Langston University's Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project

In the 1996 Farm Bill the 1985 and 1990 Farm Bills were modified to combine the Great Plains Conservation Program (GPCP), Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP), Water Quality Incentives Program (WQIP, and the Colorado River Basin Salinity Program (CRBSP) into one umbrella program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

The new program, EQIP, addresses conservation issues in locally identified priority areas that have significant natural resources degradation problems. Highest priority is given to areas with state and local government support for

financial, technical and educational assistance and where improvements will help to meet water quality objectives. The program issues 5-10 year contracts to landowners and tenants to provide incentives (payments) and cost sharing (up to 75 percent of the costs) to establish conservation practices, such as manure management systems, pest management, erosion control, and other practices that can enhance and maintain the health of natural resources. A conservation plan is required to participate in EQIP.

The program as it is currently managed is unfair to small landowners, favoring larger operations. The basis for determining a priority area is the environmental benefits index (EBI). The larger the land area to be restored, the higher the EBI becomes and the more likely the contract will be funded. Even when small landowners reside in a priority area, they still might not be eligible for contracts due to low EBIs. Competing successfully for

contracts outside the priority areas is even more difficult for small farmers because of the criteria and the normal limitation of funding. The program favors those who can pay a larger share of the costs. While the minimum the farmer must pay is 25 percent of the costs, those who can pay 50 percent or more are more competitive and get priority. Small farmers with critical natural resources degradation problems requiring immediate attention can be outbidded by wealthier ones willing to pay more of the costs. The results are that the very people most in need of assistance have the lowest participation in EQIP.

It is not benevolence that dictates the participation of the small and underserved landowners, but expediency. Collectively they control significant amounts of land that require mitigation against degradation or that affect water quality. This land is important to the economic base of rural communities, counties and whole states and

as habitat to wildlife. Investments in protecting and managing these lands are monthly investments in enhancing the future natural resource base of the country. It is good policy to assist the small and underserved farmers to manage and protect their lands. Small and underserved farmer participation is important to natural resources management on a national scale. However, it can be guaranteed only through a concerted effort to not only keep them informed of the program but to facilitate their participation. Earmarking funds by Congress is one way to guarantee that a certain amount is available for the underserved. In this way vast amounts of land could be protected now and in the future. Another way would be that the criteria for selecting priority areas include helping those otherwise unable to protect their resources. Indeed, the EBI could be redefined to facilitate the selection of small farms, or allow the pooling of resources and properties. And finally, closer scrutinies of those employees at the state

and local level who administer EQIP, to ensure rules and regulations are applied fairly and consistently, and that there is a commitment to including small and underserved farmers.

Small and underserved farmers, themselves, are the best resource to effect the necessary changes in the program so that they benefit more. They can organize into groups that articulate their problems and concerns to government agencies and to the politicians. They can invite the news media in to report on their problems. They can become members of the conservation districts or at the very least attend all meetings where decisions are being made and be advocates for whatever they need. There is help for those willing to become proactive.

***Dr. Chongo Mundende is the Project Manager for the Langston University's Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program.**

New Acting Director at USDA Office of Outreach

BIOGRAPHY FOR SHERIE HENRY

Acting Director, Sherie Henry's entire career has been with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's, former Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) in 1974, and then Rural Development. Ms Henry began her career with the former FmHA as a GS-1 Stay-In- School employee in Poplarville, MS. Henry attended Pearl River Junior College in Poplarville, MS. and Alcorn State University in Lor-

man, MS., majoring in Business Administration and Agricultural Economics. Upon completion of her studies she became an Assistant County Supervisor and Agricultural Management Specialist in Poplarville, MS. she was promoted to the position of County Supervisor and Agricultural Management Specialist in Adams County, Natchez, MS.

In 1988, Henry was promoted to al Office, located in Washington D.C. She has since been promoted to the position of Chief, Man-

agement Control Branch and then to the position of Director, Financial Management Division. In this capacity, she served as the Mission Area Management Control Officer and the liaison to the Office of Inspector General and the General Accounting Office. Henry has also served as the subject matter expert on financial management issues.

Henry has served in an acting capacity as the Deputy Administrator of Operations and Management for Rural Development and

in 1996 was designated as the Acting State Director, Rural Development, Texas.

She has served on the Secretarial Task Force, Departmental Task Force, working groups, and served as a Team Leader. She also served as the Undersecretary's designee to the Rural Development Labor-Management Partnership Council, which was awarded the Secretary's Award for Labor Management Partnership Council in 1999. She was awarded the honor of Manager of the Year for 1999 Award, by the Blacks and Minori-



Sherie Henry, Acting Director, National Office of Outreach.

ty Employee Organization. She also has received numerous awards throughout her career. Most recently, she was detailed to the Mississippi State Office to assist the Mid-Delta Empowerment Zone.

She is married to James Phillip Henry, also of Poplarville, MS.

Black Farmers Conference

Continued from page 1



Small farmers Willie Crute, Jr. of Baskerville, VA and Charles W. Conner of South Hill, VA attended the conference to find out how they could improve their operations and get some ideas on alternative crops.

with cutting-edge information on farmer-related issues, such as farm credit and financing, farm management techniques, communication and networking skills and various other related topics.

According to John Boyd, President and co-founder of NBFA, one of the major objectives of this conference was to "link farmers with the right people..."

Boyd said, "I want to see every farmer leave with the correct information on what, how and who to contact for information on USDA programs, and to learn all they can about USDA programs.

"As an institution, I want to sign people up for the class-action lawsuit "

With nearly 500 in attendance, there was a large and diverse group of farmers representing every corner of the nation, but each with the same concerns—the fate of the African-American farmers.

Willie Adams, a small full-time farmer from Greensboro, GA, who raises 40-head of cattle and oversees a poultry operation, attended this conference to, "get a clear understanding of where we [African-American] farmers are going and pass on information that I receive to other farmers in my area."

George Hilderbrandt, a small farmer from Leavenworth, KS, who farms 250 acres of soybeans and wheat and 20 acres of organic vegetables, supported the conference. He knows first

hand the detriments that discrimination is having on African-American farmers.

According to Hildebrandt, president of the Kansas Black Farmers Association, "at one time there was about 30 black farmers in Leavenworth County. Now I am one of the two remaining."

Many dignitaries were present to show support including, the Undersecretary of Agriculture, Michael V. Dunn; Tom Joyner, Radio Talk Show Host; Ben Johnson, Special Assistant to President Clinton; Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, Third District, Virginia, and Beverly Smith, former Talk Show Host, BET.

Rep. Earl Hilliard, who serves the Seventh District in Alabama and serves on the Agriculture Appropriations Committee, urged the group with fighting words, "You can not expect the USDA, or the government as a whole to advance your organization's goals any better than you can...no one should fight for you more aggressively than you!"

Hilliard also emphasized to the group, saying "I do not believe in alienation, but cooperation—I believe that whatever strengthens black farmers will strengthen America."

Rep. Eva Clayton, First District, North Carolina, a big supporter of minority farmers, was present to support the cause, as she presented the keynote speech at a luncheon. Clayton said, that



LuNisha Vann, Editor, National Office of Outreach Newsletter , captures comments of small farmer advocate Rep. Eva Clayton, North Carolina,.

although "farmers do not discriminate against who they distribute to, discriminatory behavior in the USDA offices and in local-level offices is the reason why hundreds of minority farmers have been denied assistance."

Phillip Haynie, III, son of co-founder Phillip Haynie II, remembers his father and John Boyd working tirelessly at their kitchen table, organizing and strategizing for the association.

"While I was in college, I assisted them with drafting documents, I helped because I know how small farmers struggle with accessing loans, equipment, and

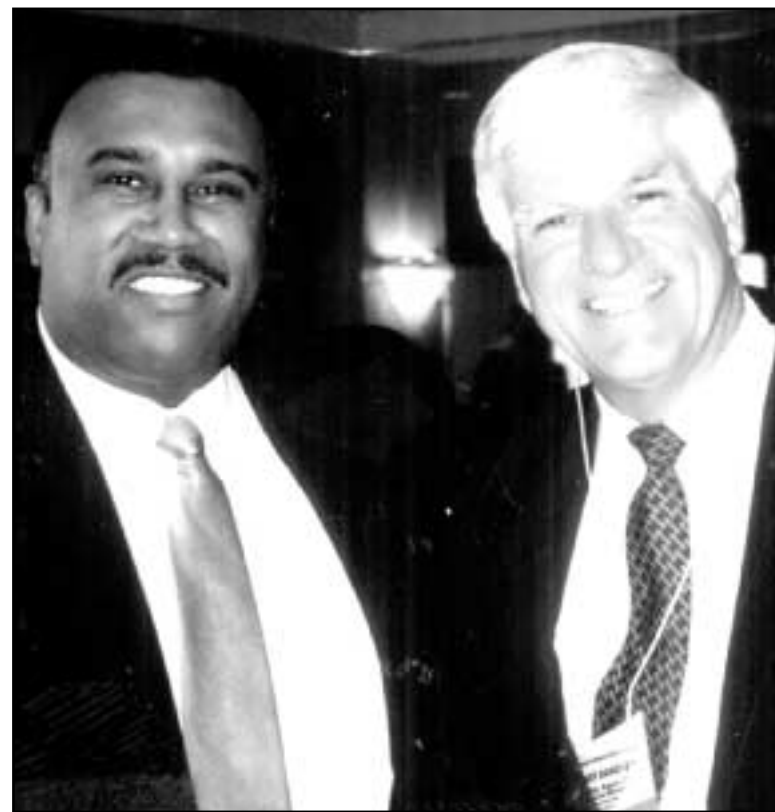
getting resources to make their land more profitable."

Young Haynie, who is a fifth generation farmer, says that he wants to "continue to promote farming among minorities and to show people that farming is not just about plows and sows, but it is also about research and technology."

The visionary farmer is excited about the future of the organization. Haynie sees the organization in the future focusing on developing programs to assist minorities tap into international markets and giving them an opportunity to network on a global marketplace."



Rep. Robert "Bobby" Scott, Virginia responding to small farmer's concerns.



John Boyd, Jr., President of the National Black Farmers Association and Undersecretary of Agriculture Mike Dunn at the first National Black Farmers Association 2000 Conference in Richmond, VA.

Students Improve Community Services with GIS



Student Monica Ramczyk, wearing a Global Positioning Systems unit which is used in conjunction with information satellites to map geographic positions.

The 2501 Project at Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Ojibwa Community College in Wisconsin known locally as the Guiding Resource Opportunities with Tribal Heritage (GROWTH), is making tremendous strides in its outreach initiatives.

Project GROWTH provides students with practical learning experiences and is improving several community services utilizing the Geographic Informa-

tion Systems (GIS), a computer tool that combines demographic information and roads for future land use planning.

Since the GIS has been in place at LCO Ojibwa Community College, students can now participate in interesting and interactive projects with several community entities.

Two Agriculture and Natural Resources majors assisted LCO biologists to complete an inventory of mallard and wood duck

structures for the Lac Courte Oreilles Circle of Flight program.

The laboratory also afforded students the opportunity to work with the LCO Fire Department in planning and completing an inventory of fire hydrant locations using the Geographic Positioning System (GPS) technology and Arc View GIS. The results will determine whether or not more hydrants are needed in the targeted area.

Another successful partnering opportunity the GIS laboratory created for students included the LCO Housing and Tribal Governing Board (TGB) and three GIS students, who conducted an inventory of tribal homes in Skunowong and Gumo Lake Communities.

Using GPS and ArcView GIS, they designed a map showing tribal homes that are missing fire numbers.

According to Leslie Ramczyk, Director, Project GROWTH, that data will locate LCO tribal elders' homes for snow plowing services.

Project GROWTH has also implemented GIS and Computer Aided Drafting and Design (CADD) technology into some

of its courses including Carpentry, Surveying, Information Technology, and Natural Resources.

GIS is also used in the summer pre-college curriculum to encourage interest in math and science areas.

As learning institutions steadily enhance their technical

capabilities and stay abreast of cutting-edge technology more students will advance and communities will benefit from the services.

For more information about Project Growth, please contact Leslie Ramczyk at (715) 634-4790.



Anna Heath, Assistant GIS Specialist, digitizes a map in the GIS laboratory at Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College in Hayward, WS.

Alabama's 2501 Project Builds Communities through Collaboration

The Small Farmers Outreach and Technical Assistance Program (2501 Project) at Alabama A&M University has been very successful in its outreach efforts.

The Project employs farmer groups, associations and/or cooperatives to marshal existing resources in rural Alabama to address the issues small farmers and rural residents in the area face.

This concept and the holistic approach to outreach form the cornerstones of the outreach and technical assistance efforts in North Alabama. The 2501 Project at Alabama A&M University believes that it can help rural areas apply the cooperative model to wide a variety of prob-

lems.

Abiding by the aforementioned cornerstones, the 2501 Project is instrumental in the development of three associations: the NorthWest Alabama Small Farmers' Agriculture Improvement Association, the Reed Town Incubator Center, and the Madison County Agricultural Production and Marketing Cooperative.

The NorthWest Alabama Small Farmers' Agriculture Improvement Association, headquartered in Franklin County, has 43 active members from Franklin, Colbert, and Lauderdale counties. Working with both the 2501 Project and the Alabama Cooperative Extension

System (ACES), championed by Tommy Teacher, Extension Agent, Franklin County, and a \$37,000 grant from the Heifer Project International, this association produces meat goats, cattle, and pastured poultry.

The second organization, the Reed Town Incubator Center, also headquartered in Franklin County has 22 members. Its aim is to stimulate general economic growth in the Russellville area by attracting agricultural and non-agricultural businesses to the area. Johnny Smith, Agribusiness Management Specialist, from the 2501 Project provided the necessary coordination, motivation, and linkages.

Madison County Agricultural

Production and Marketing Cooperative, the third group, is still in its infant stage. Its aim is to pool member resources together to achieve the common goal of producing and marketing non-traditional produce such as canola, fruits, and vegetables, and organic agricultural products.

The 2501 Project and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System provide these groups with training and technical assistance in the development process of cooperatives, principles of cooperatives, functions and roles of cooperative board members, parliamentary procedures, and grant writing.

This collaboration is an excellent example of how different

entities can come together and pull resources to solve a common problem. Through the aforementioned associations, plus embracing the holistic approach to outreach, the 2501 Project has had remarkable impact on rural communities in North Alabama, particularly as it relates to small and limited resource farmers.

The project is currently serving over 500 small and limited resource farmers in 13 counties. For more information about this effort, please contact Dr. Duncan M. Chembezi, Associate Director of 2501 Project at Alabama A&M University, at 1-(800)-548-5000 or by e-mail at dchembezi@aamu.edu.

Vermont's Discussion Groups: Effective for Problem-Solving



Members of a discussion group assemble to share and exchange ideas and concerns.

One of the barriers many farmers face is isolation. Because of the nature of their work, many farmers, growers, and producers do not have the opportunities to visit other farms and talk about what they do and why they do it—especially not to an understanding audience that faces many of

the same issues.

Consequently, when a problem arises, many farmers are left trying to solve it on their own, without the benefit of a knowledgeable support system.

One method of combating this isolation is through the development of discussion groups, which

are formed in different ways for different purposes.

The Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) in Vermont uses discussion groups as a method for getting farmers to take control over their own problem-solving and professional development.

Often groups come together because they want to explore some aspect of their business development such as new marketing strategies, business forecasting, bookkeeping, or web page development. Other times, the subjects are more personal and may include balancing the needs of the business with family demands, stress management, time management or health care concerns.

The important aspect here is not the topic, but the fact that by sharing stories, ideas, and concerns each group provides a level of support to its members. This is difficult to find on the outside.

Sometimes a guest speaker is

invited to speak on a particular subject; however, the groups often find that they can be their own 'experts'.

Not only do these meetings provide an opportunity for members to exchange experiences, skills and knowledge, they also provide an important opportunity to socialize, tour other farms, and 'get away' for a few hours each month.

As some of the discussion groups enter their third year, they have become quite sophisticated about their planning. One group even schedules a retreat so they can focus on planning the next year's meeting topics.

An unusual aspect of these groups is that they are not commodity specific. Mixing up the types of farmers that participate results in creative problem solving and opportunities to learn about resources other farmers use.

Each group is unique. Some

groups consist of couples that farm together; others are mostly women. Groups range from six to 12 members. The sizes are ideal for good conversation. Most are open to anyone who wants to join. They are organized informally and generally do not have officers, take minutes or possess any of the other usual meeting components. Normally, they meet once a month, rotating homes for meetings.

The WAgN staff provides leadership to these groups, but avoids selecting the actual topic setting. It is important to let the groups have an identity of their own, so they can develop a sense of ownership for the group. These discussion groups multiply our program impact and provide cost-effective outreach to farmers in all stages of business development.

For more information about WAgN, contact Mary Peabody at (802) 223-2389

Recruitment & Retention: What is the Future of Young Farmers



Kareffren Bagby, outstanding youth farmer was approved for a youth loan through FSA for his cow-calf operation

Kareffren Bagby is different from most pre-teens who usually hang out at malls or play Sony playstation games. This young man plans to keep his family's tradition of farming alive for future generations.

Bagby, from Preston, OK., was recently awarded a youth loan from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). He

worked closely with LuBertha Nash, Outreach Specialist, with the Grasslands Center of Excellence (GLCE). Bagby plans to purchase six black Angus and one black Baldy with the loan proceeds and put them on his family's 40-acre farm.

Since working with Nash, he has learned important management techniques to ensure that his future operation will be successful. This includes administering vaccination shots to cattle, managing a good grazing program for a healthy herd, and getting the best returns on inputs.

Bagby's grandfather is very proud of him and believes that he will make a successful farmer. He said, "I think he will make it as a farmer, because he loves working with cows and horses, as well as doing anything related to the farm."

Bagby who attends church

religiously, is on the Principal's Honor Roll and has perfect attendance at Preston Middle School. A member of the Oklahoma Junior Rodeo Association (OJRA), he has won either first or second place each time he has competed. He is a member of the 4-H club and received a Honorable Mention first place award in the Open Class and second place in his age group at the recent 4-H Okmulgee County Fair.

When he is not busy on the farm or sharpening his roping skills, Bagby is busy with his second love—pencil sketching. He loves to sketch farm and ranch lifestyle portraits. Some of his sketches have been featured in two issues of the "Western Horseman" magazine and have been displayed in the Will Rogers Museum in Victorville, Calif.

This pre-teen is well on his way to becoming a successful businessperson. Nash

plans to continue working with Bagby and hopes he will attend Langston University and major in natural resources management.

Ivan Drake also received a youth loan for his sheep project. Drake exhibited his sheep at the Okfuskee County Fair, winning first place at his first entry.

He won first place with an 80-pound male for the Breed Champion Dourest Market LAVB. He also won \$250 dollars with his breed champion.

This 16-year-old junior who attends Weleeka High School, manages his time wisely. His homework and basketball activities occupy a large amount of his time, but he still has time to work on his farm.

Last summer, one of his prize-winning sheep gave birth to twins, one male and one female. He plans to use

There is a growing concern in the USDA regarding the fate of agriculture in the nation. According to the 1997 U.S. Census report, the average age of farmers in America is 54.3 years. As it continues to rise, many questions and concerns are being asked. Who will take over small family farms? What is the future of small family farms in the country? How are federal agencies, agriculture associations, and agriculture managers dealing with this issue? Langston University's Center for Outreach Programs through the Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has been successful in encouraging younger generations to continue the tradition of farming. Read for yourself.

Editor

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Oklahoma's Grasslands Center:

Vital Community Resource

Grasslands cover over 50 percent of the entire state of Oklahoma, provide habitat for two-thirds of Oklahoma's wildlife, help to reduce soil erosion, maintain surface and ground water quality and provide food, fiber, and other products for Oklahoma's citizens. They are among the state's most economically important and beneficial natural resources.

Most of the grasslands are privately owned, much by small and underserved farmers, ranchers, and landusers who are challenged to make a profit from their land, protect it from overgrazing, erosion, and contamination by pollutants, and remain on the land.

The Grasslands Center of Excellence at Langston University provides leadership to these small farmers, ranchers, and rural communities in their struggle to survive. Its assists in improving grasslands management, developing better methods of communication, providing educational opportunities, services, and information on the grasslands. It also facilitates research to ensure quality services to small and underserved farmers.

The Center seeks to enhance public awareness of the role grasslands play in ecology, economics and improving the quality of life. It fosters teamwork, gains support for programs through grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, donations and endowments, and develops and maintains mutually beneficial relationships with federal and state agencies, universities, colleges, and public and private organizations.

The Center conducts research and

demonstrations on grasslands resource management. It also identifies the needs of the small farmer, develops goals for them, and provides grasslands resource management information and guidance on assessing public programs.

The Grasslands Center has three main programs that function to help bring these goals to reality. In the Multi-disciplinary Research Program, staff member work to coordinate and facilitate teams for a systematic approach to problem solving. They also develop proposals, administer grants and conduct conferences for small farmers.

The Grasslands Center assists in enhancing educational services and opportunities through seminars, curriculum development, and the addition of new academic programs consistent with the needs and requirements of national and state governments.

The Outreach Program provides technical assistance to small farmers, conducts workshops, organizes tours and field demonstrations and prepares presentations for educational purposes.

Grasslands are truly one of Oklahoma's most valuable resources. The staff at Langston University's Grasslands Center of Excellence works together with the small farmers and federal and state agencies to sustain, protect and enhance this natural resource.

To obtain more information regarding Langston University's Grasslands Center of Excellence, please write to: Center for Outreach Programs, Langston University, P.O. Box 1258, Langston, OK 73050 or call (405) 466-6023.

Future of Young Farmers

Continued from page 6



Ivan Drake, FSA Youth Loan recipient, shows off his prize-winning sheep.

the female for future contests.

Drake shares some of his secrets to good breeding, "The secret to a healthy lamb is feeding it the right mixture of grass and grain. All this summer I fed the two small ones grass, now I am feeding them grain for the fall and winter season."

Drake plans to start a dairy business and raise his livestock on his family's 60-acre farm. He used part of his prize money to pay on his loan.

Chase and Brian Monroe are two other upcoming young farmers in Okfuskee County who both were awarded an FSA youth loan for

\$5000 each.

These two young men purchased hay and seven heads of cattle to place on the 134-acre farm leased by their grandparents.

The two young farmers plan to attend college and use the revenues earned from their cattle operation to pay for their college education.

Outreach Specialist Larry Chandler was pleased to provide assistance to the Monroe family. "It felt like I was helping to pass the family torch of farming to the next generation to continue a family heritage. The FSA Youth Loan program is an excellent avenue to promote farming among younger generations. Without it the future of young farmers would be questionable," Chandler said.

To obtain additional information regarding youth loans, contact the Center for Outreach Programs at (405) 466-3256 or your local FSA office, or access the FSA home page at www.fsa.usda.gov



Chase and Brian Monroe are getting a head start on careers in agriculture by learning about grassland management techniques from Outreach Specialist Larry Chandler.



Former FBCC student, Pawl Gjermundson, prepares to visit the segment communities of FBIR to work the land for garden spots.

Fort Berthold Community College (FBCC), North Dakota has incorporated machinery, equipment, labor and other resources to provide six segments of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation (FBIR), the means to return to gardening.

Gardening has an integral part in the history and heritage of the Three Affiliated Tribes: of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations. Historically, these nations were known to be great farmers of vegetable crops.

The Garrison project, which is

Fort Berthold Restores Gardening Heritage in North Dakota

the largest earth filled dam, inundated 155,000 acres of productive bottomlands in 1951. As a result, the native people were forced to urban areas to find jobs in factories thousands of miles away. Today, these people are returning to their home reservation and their traditional roots. In an effort to restore the gardens, FBCC initiated a project to help restore a reliable, quality food source, promote nutritionally sound diets, and increase the availability of fresh vegetables for the

reservation.

FBCC has provided the people on the reservation with services such as preparing old garden sites, and creating new ones at their residences where they can plant traditional and non-traditional gardens.

Ron Klein, Soils/Plant Specialist with FBCC and Gene M not have the equipment needed to prepare the ground for planting. But, the college provided it, plus handlers to assist and guide.

In addition to providing this service to residents, this program

provides the college students opportunities for part-time employment.

Students are also responsible for operating the machinery to till the land so the clients can begin their gardens.

With the assistance of the 2501 funds, this program is growing and continues to be successful as an outreach assistance, educational tool, and inspiration for the elders and tribal members of the Fort Berthold Reservation

For further information about this project, contact Cheyenne Erickson at (701) 627-4738, extension 276.

North Dakota Community College Helps Refurbish Bison Population

Vast herds of bison once covered the Great Plains and supplied food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials for the Plains Indians. Reports by early explorers mentioned herds numbering from 10,000 to 100,000 in one area. It is said that the roaring of the bulls was like the continuous roll of a hundred drums that could be heard for miles. Although natural causes such as blizzards, drowning, drought, and wolves led to losses of bison, the trappers, hunters and sellers were the greatest cause of their extermination. The bison were used not only for meat, but also for robes. At one time the bison was the sole source of life to the Indians of the Great Plains. They were a source of meat, shelter, entertainment, and spiritual strength. In the mid-1800s, their numbers shrank to near extinction. Several individuals can be credited with having the foresight to take action to keep the bison from being wiped out of existence. Today, there are over 250,000 bison in North America, with 23,000 in North Dakota alone. With the aid of the Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project, bison are making their resurgence on the Spirit Lake Nation Indian Reservation. In November 1999, the management of the bison herd was handed over to the Cankdeska Cikana Community College, (CCCC). With the assistance of the Intertribal Bison Cooperative, based out of Rapid City, SD, detailed management and marketing plans have been established, including harvest-

ing all two-year-old and older bulls that are not going to be used as breeding stock.

This will not only produce a significant amount of meat, but also a substantial supply of bison by-products, which will be offered to artisans in the Spirit Lake Nation.

Plans are being made so that once the number of bison increases to levels of self-sufficiency; local ranchers may acquire bison calves to start their own herds.

Participants in the program are required to meet certain criteria, which include taking Animal Science classes at CCCC to ensure that they have the adequate knowledge and skills to raise bison.

For more information regarding the bison program, contact Melinda Martin at Candeska Cikana Community College, Fort Totten, ND at (701) 766-1385, or use martlea@hoopster.little-hoop.cc.nd.us to email her.



Bison population restored. Thanks to the efforts of the Cankdeska Cikana Community College 2501 Outreach Project.